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ABSTRACT

Noting the importance of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) for teaching kindergarten students, this guide with accompanying videotape is designed to help kindergarten practitioners assess their classroom's level of readiness. The guide discusses the concept of kindergarten readiness as including the capacity of kindergarten classrooms and programs to support all 5-year-olds' development through learning. The guide contains an audit tool for examining five characteristics of kindergarten classrooms: (1) the classroom environment; (2) the classroom materials; (3) the curriculum and structure; (4) the teachers' knowledge and certification; and (5) the quality of the kindergarten experiences. This assessment tool delineates descriptors or conditions of DAP within each of the five areas and provides indicators to help in assessing how well a classroom or program is implementing DAP. Implementation is described in varying degrees: full, partial, or not implemented. Space on the checklist is included for additional information needed and action to be taken regarding each indicator. The guide contains 18 references and resources. The accompanying 38-minute videotape shows two condensed half-day kindergarten classrooms with the following components: opening activities, music/movement, whole group activities, center activities, transition time, interactive writing, journal writing, choice time, and dismissal. The videotape concludes with an in-depth clip illustrating the characteristics of DAP as related to each of the five characteristics of kindergarten classrooms. (KB)

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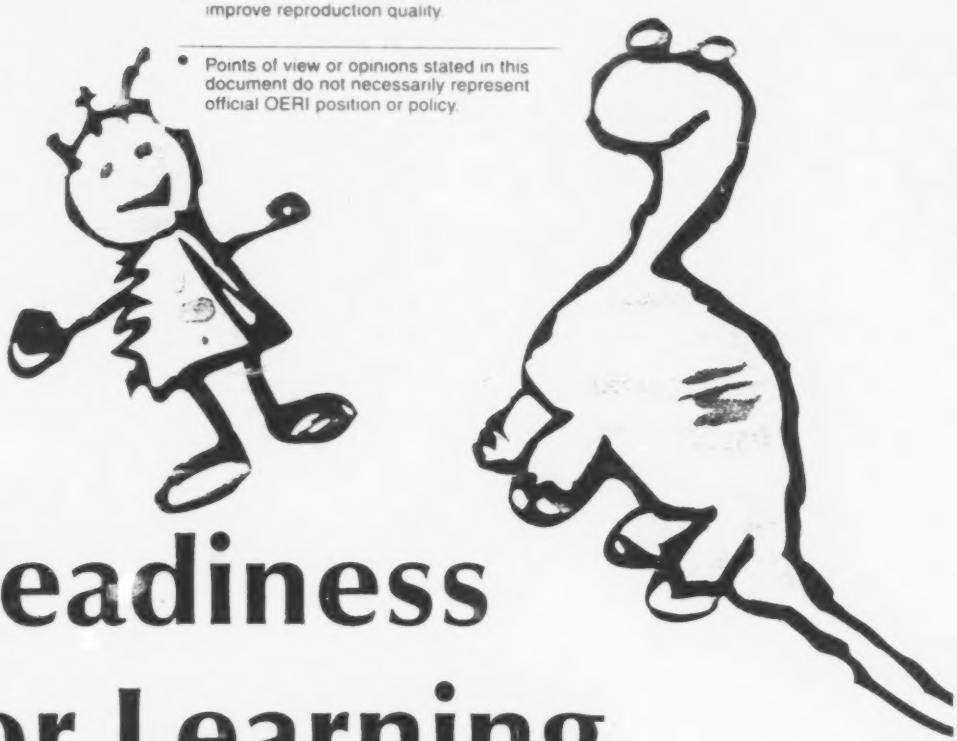

Readiness for Learning

A Readiness Audit Tool for Kindergarten Classrooms

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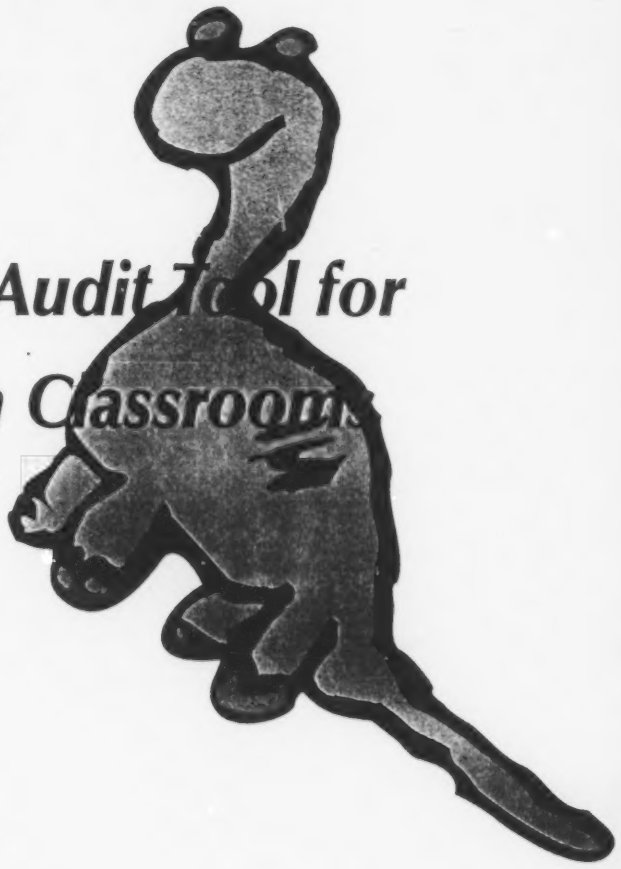

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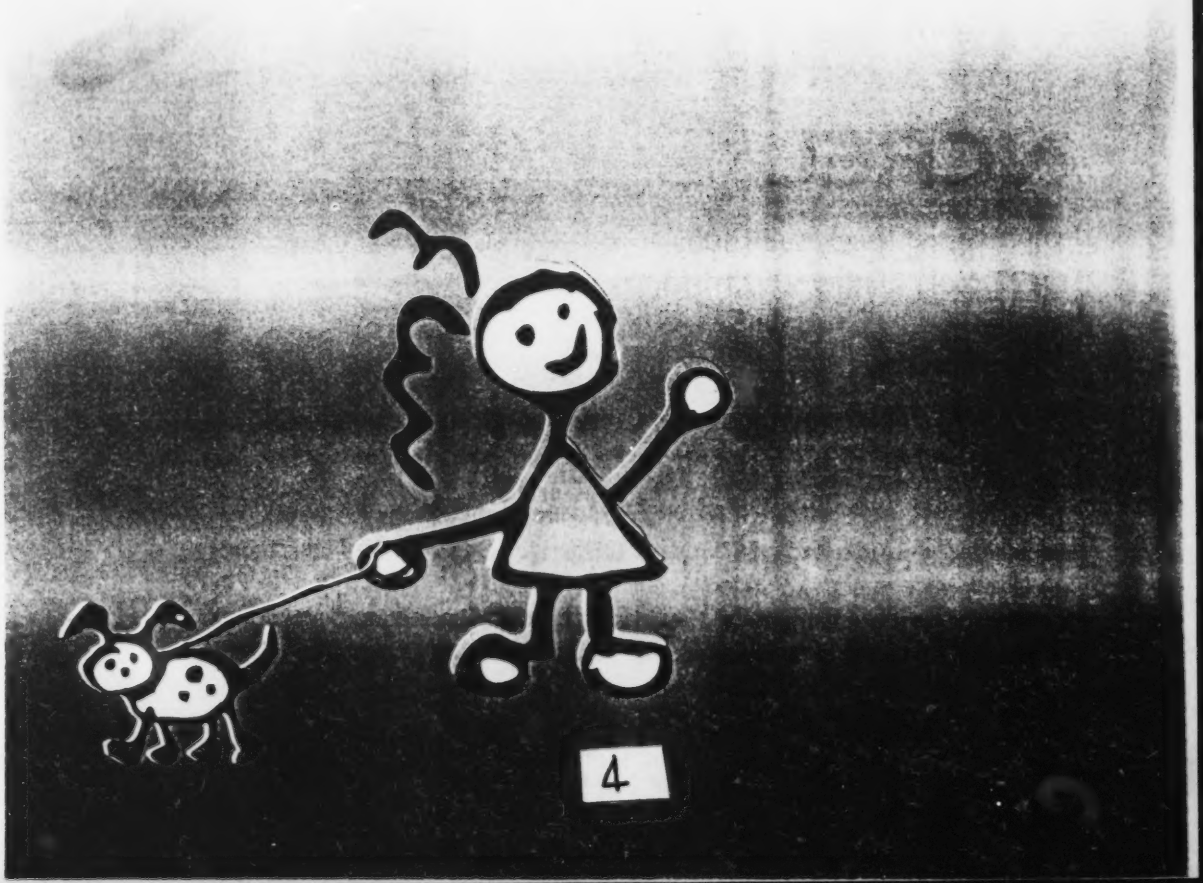
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Introduction

Kindergarten readiness is a two-dimensional concept. The first dimension addresses children's capacity for learning at age 5. The second is concerned with the capacity of kindergarten classrooms and programs to support all 5-year-olds' development through learning. Today, most kindergarten readiness practices focus on the first dimension (e.g., readiness assessments and screening of young children). While there is no consensus on how to implement the objective embodied in the second dimension (i.e., making kindergarten classrooms "ready" for all 5-year-olds), there is a general belief that kindergarten classrooms should be developmentally appropriate for all 5-year-olds. According to Diane Trister Dodge (1993), kindergarten classrooms are composed of five characteristics:

- The kindergarten classroom's **environment**
- The kindergarten classroom's **materials**
- The kindergarten **curriculum and structure**
- The kindergarten teacher's **knowledge and certification**
- The quality of the kindergarten **experiences**

Building from these characteristics, the "Readiness for Learning" audit tool provides a general format for assessing the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) in kindergarten classrooms.

Purpose

- To help kindergarten practitioners assess the implementation of DAP in their classrooms
- To provide kindergarten practitioners with a way to gather the information they need to prepare and plan their classrooms for young children
- To provide kindergarten practitioners with a vehicle for stimulating discussions about the second dimension of kindergarten readiness: making classrooms ready for all 5-year-olds

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How to Use This Audit Tool

An individual teacher can use this audit tool to assess the implementation of DAP in a single classroom, or a team of practitioners, working together, can use the tool to assess a school's entire kindergarten program. Teachers can also assess one another's classrooms. In addition, kindergarten practitioners can use this audit tool to inform primary-grade teachers and parents about the structure of the kindergarten program and classroom.

The audit tool is divided into a number of large sections, each corresponding to one of the five characteristics of a kindergarten classroom. For each characteristic, we list several descriptors or conditions of developmentally appropriate practice. Then we provide a number of indicators to help you assess how well your kindergarten classroom or program is implementing DAP.

About the Indicators

The indicators used to describe the five characteristics of kindergarten classrooms are adapted from the National Association for the Education of Young Children's report *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8* (Bredekamp, 1993) and from Diane Trister Dodge's *A Guide for Supervisors and Trainers on Implementing the Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood* (1993). These indicators describe developmentally appropriate practices that correspond with individual characteristics and offer suggestions on ways to better prepare kindergarten classrooms for 5-year-olds.

About the Scale

The scale presented in this audit tool is designed to help you determine whether or not DAP is being implemented in your kindergarten classroom or program. The implementation of DAP is described in three varying degrees:

1. *Fully implemented*—all of the DAP indicators are being implemented in the classroom
2. *Partially implemented*—at least half of the DAP indicators are being implemented
3. *Not implemented*—less than half or none of the DAP indicators are being implemented

Taking Action

Once you have rated your classroom or program on each of the indicators, take a few moments to identify the indicators that are "partially implemented" or "not implemented" or those that "need more information." Review the indicators carefully and jot down specific actions you can take to fully implement DAP in your classroom or program. If you need extra help or information, we have provided a list of useful resources for implementing DAP at the end of this booklet.

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Characteristic: Environment

Descriptors	Indicators	Fully Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented	Needs More Information	Actions
The classroom/program is well organized. • The classroom/program is organized and planned to support positive interactions and meet individual and group needs.	1. Clearly defined activity centers or themes can accommodate 1-5 children simultaneously. 2. Noisy centers/themes are separated from quiet ones. 3. Private hideaways and soft spaces are available when children want to be alone. 4. Materials that are used together are displayed together.					
Each child is accepted and valued. • Children try out new ideas. • Children apply learned concepts. • Each child is allowed to learn and develop at his or her own pace.	5. Centers and themes are set up for different kinds of activities (e.g., art, dramatic play, blocks, table toys, books). 6. Pictures related to topics that children are learning in the classroom are displayed on walls at children's eye level. 7. Children's work is displayed along with teacher's selected pictures. 8. Materials are displayed on low shelves near where they are used, with picture labels showing where they belong. 9. Materials are multicultural, nonsexist, and relevant to children's experiences.		8			

Characteristic: Materials

Descriptors	Indicators	Fully Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented	Needs More Information	Actions
Materials are engaging to children. • Materials engage children in a variety of activities. • Materials reflect children's interests.	1. Materials and equipment selected for each center or theme encourage hands-on experimentation (e.g., they are colorful and fun for children to use).					
Materials are appropriate for children's use. • Materials are "age appropriate." • Materials are appropriate to children's developmental stages. • Materials are relevant to children's life experiences.	2. Materials and equipment vary in complexity to engage children at different levels of understanding or development.					
Materials are safe for children to use. • Materials promote safe and proper use by students.	3. Materials are in good condition, with no sharp edges, peeling paint, or splinters. 4. Low furniture is used to define different areas of the room, centers, or themes. 5. Materials with small pieces are stored in containers.					
Materials allow for simultaneous use by individual children or groups of children.	6. A sufficient number of materials (or sets of materials) are available for use by more than one child.					

Characteristic: Curriculum and Structure

Descriptors	Indicators	Fully Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented	Needs More Information	Actions
Curriculum and structure foster continuity of learning across early childhood programs (e.g., from prekindergarten through first grade). • Curriculum and structure encourage cross-program planning. • Curriculum and structure promote cross-program communication.	1. Prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first-grade teachers engage in ongoing curriculum with one another. 2. Prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first-grade teachers have ongoing communication regarding each child's learning of various content materials. 3. Prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first-grade teachers work with parents to plan for each child's transition from one program to another.					
Curriculum and structure support the learning of each child.	4. Each activity/project helps children build on previous experiences associated with the activity/project. 5. The curriculum and instruction are responsive to individual differences in ability and interests. 6. Children are allowed to move at their own pace in learning various skills and concepts.					

Characteristic: Curriculum and Structure (continued)

Descriptors	Indicators	Fully Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented	Needs More Information	Actions
Curriculum and structure support the learning of each child.	**7.** The adult-child ratio allows for the active participation of each child with an adult (e.g., 1:13). **8.** Teachers use a variety of assessments to evaluate children's work and progress (e.g., work sampling, portfolios, High Scope), rather than relying on standardized tests. **9.** Children have opportunities to work in small and large groups that include adults.					
Curriculum and structure help children make smooth transitions. • Children make smooth transitions between groups, activities, centers, and themes.	**10.** The school day has clearly defined periods, and each period is associated with a specific activity. **11.** Children have sufficient time to move from one activity, center, or theme to another. The amount of time given is appropriate to the children's developmental level. **12.** Teachers and other adults in the classroom give children sufficient warning before a transition period.					

Characteristic: Curriculum and Structure (continued)

Descriptors	Indicators	Fully Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented	Needs More Information	Actions
The structure of the day is comfortable to children.	**13.** Children have a set and consistent schedule to follow each day. **14.** There is an appropriate balance of quiet and active time each day. **15.** Teachers and adults explain what is coming next and what is expected before a transition period. **16.** Preparation activities/ routines are done in small groups rather than in one large group. **17.** Children are actively involved in transition activities (e.g., set up, clean up). **18.** Children have opportunities to engage in structured activities outdoors—either in small or large groups.					

Characteristic: Teacher's Knowledge and Certification

Descriptors	Indicators	Fully Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented	Needs More Information	Actions
Teachers are qualified to work with children aged 3–8. • Teachers understand child development and how children learn.	1. Kindergarten teachers are certified to work with children aged 3–8. 2. Teachers receive their certification from an accredited early childhood education program or an elementary program with an emphasis on early childhood education. 3. Experienced teachers receive ongoing professional development in using developmentally appropriate practices and curriculum and working with parents. 4. Professional development for new teachers is relevant to kindergarten practices (e.g., integrated curriculum, themes/center development, working with children with diverse needs, assessing children's work).					

Characteristic: Teacher's Knowledge and Certification (continued)

Descriptors	Indicators	Fully Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented	Needs More Information	Actions
Teachers understand the relationship between parental involvement and children's learning.	5. Teachers have a plan for engaging parents in classroom activities. 6. Communication between teachers and parents is open and relevant to the "total" development of the child. 7. Teachers work together with each child's parent(s) to develop an individualized learning plan for the child. 8. Teachers inform parents of available school and community resources to aid their children's development.					

Characteristic: Experiences

Descriptors	Indicators	Fully Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented	Needs More Information	Actions
Classroom experiences foster a sense of security and confidence in children.	1. Teachers ask questions to encourage children's thinking and self-expression. 2. Teachers accept more than one right answer. 3. Concepts and skills are introduced through meaningful activities (e.g., playing with blocks, measuring sand and water, classifying materials).					
Classroom experiences engage children's active involvement. • Children are encouraged to try out new ideas and concepts. • Children are able to apply what they have learned. • Children have opportunities to use their whole bodies.	4. Children engage in activities that enable them to express themselves (e.g., art, dramatic/imaginative play, storytelling). 5. Teachers and other adults facilitate children's work and play by guiding their use of materials and their interactions (e.g., suggesting new uses for materials, asking guiding questions). 6. Daily activities encourage children's use of large and small muscles (e.g., jumping, running, stretching, cutting, drawing, using manipulatives).					

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Characteristic: Experiences (continued)

Descriptors	Indicators	Fully Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented	Needs More Information	Actions
Classroom experiences encourage children's self-selection of activities and experiences.	7. Children have many opportunities to learn about different concepts. 8. Children have many opportunities throughout the day to select their own learning activities.					
Classroom experiences encourage children to work together to reach common goals.	9. Children work together on projects.					

Resources

Environment

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About NCREL

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